

200
RELIGION described.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED, Sept. 19, 1759.

A T A
Monthly Lecture in *Yorkshire*.

Published (with ENLARGEMENTS) at the
unanimous request of MINISTERS, and
Others, who heard it.

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By ALVEREY JACKSON.

L O N D O N:

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RELIGION described.

S E R M O N

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Monthly Lecture in Yorkshire.

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Others who heard it.

By NATHANIEL JACKSON.

L O N D O N

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RELIGION described.

J A M. i. 27.

Religion.

THIS is that single and important word, which I name to you as the subject of the following discourse.

OUR lot is cast in an age and nation, wherein there is much talk about religion, among persons of every rank and profession. Happy will it be for us, if we understand the true nature of religion; if we experience the vital principle of it planted in our minds; if we possess the living power of it in our hearts; and duly practise it in our lives. But I am afraid too many of those, who would be considered as its most zealous advocates, very much mistake what it really is: and I am certain, that without a just knowledge of religion, there can be no true experience or due practice of it; for *a soul without knowledge is not good**. We must first *know the true*

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God,

* Prov. xix. 2.

God, before we can *serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind*^b: for ignorantly to *worship an unknown God*^c, can neither be ~~an~~ acceptable to him, nor profitable to us.

Now in order to inform the ignorant, reclaim the erroneous, and establish the well instructed in the faith and practice of true religion; I shall endeavour, by divine assistance, to shew you what it is, or wherein it consists.

In general then, the proper definition of religion is—*The worship of a Deity*: and in particular it may be considered in these several views,

FIRST, True or false;

SECONDLY, Natural or revealed;

THIRDLY, Moral or instituted; and

FOURTHLY, Speculative and notional, or experimental and practical.

FIRST, Religion is either *true*, or *false*: and

I. As to true religion, it is that adoration and worship, homage and service, love and obedience, which is due from the reasonable creature, to the only living and true God, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; considered as the creator and preserver of men: for *these three are one*^d, and their name one. Under this view it was that God said, *let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. To which it is added, *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him*^e. So that, in the

^b 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.
Mat. xxviii. 19.

^c Act. xvii. 23.

^d 1 Joh. v. 7.
^e Gen. i. 26, 27.

the account of his creating man, we have both an unity and a plurality; an *he* and an *us*; an *our* and a *his* image. And in the further and brighter discoveries of divine revelation, we are assured, that this plurality is a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; even the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: for God the Father is *he who created all things by Jesus Christ*^f; for there is *one God, the Father of all: and one Lord Jesus Christ*^g, by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist^h: for in the beginning was the word, or son, and the word was with God, and the word was God;—all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was madeⁱ. And in the same beginning, we read, that *the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*^k; to form a beautiful world out of a confused chaos of indigested matter: for by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens^l. So that, God our makers^m, is God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Now true religion respects the following particulars,

1. THE right object of it, which is the one only living and true God, in three persons, as

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hath

^f Eph. iii. 9. ^g Ch. iv. 6. ^h 1 Cor. viii. 6. ⁱ Col. i. 16, 17. ^j Joh. i. 1, 3. ^k Gen. i. 1, 2, &c. ^l Joh. xxvi. 13. ^m — xxxv. 10.

hath been already described : for the foundation of all true religion, is the firm belief that *there is one God*^m, and that he alone is worthy of the highest adoration, and best service, from his reasonable creatures : for even *the devils believe that there is one God*ⁿ ; and surely he therefore *that cometh to God, must believe that he is*^o. The first commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me*^p, requireth us to know, and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly ; that is, to give *unto the Lord Jehovah the glory due unto his name, and to worship him in the beauty of holiness*^q : for it is written, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*^r.

2. THE proper subject of true religion ; which is the whole man, soul and body, heart and life, principle and practice. So we are commanded to *glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's*^s. And this we are to do by a sincere and supreme love to God, manifested in a willing, entire, unreserved, persevering obedience, and subjection to him : for the first and great commandment is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*^t. And the end of Christ's delivering us out of the hands of our enemies, is, *that we might serve him*

^m Mar. xii. 32.

^p Exod. xx. 3.

^o 1 Cor. vi. 20.

ⁿ Jam. ii. 19.

^q Psal. xxix. 2.

^r Luk. x. 27.

^s Heb. xi. 6.

^t Mat. iv. 10.

him in holiness and righteousness, before him all the days of our life". And it is the character of those who are righteous before God, that they walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord": for our Saviour hath said, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; but he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings*^x: for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments^y.

3. THAT our religion may be true, it must be guided and directed by a right rule; which is the holy scriptures. This is that only compleat system, and certain directory of all true religion, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, of whom they testify: for all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man, the true worshipper, of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works^z. And therefore, if we would know, and chuse the way of truth, we must lay these judgments^b of God before us, to direct us in our choice; we must esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and stick unto them^c; we must search the scriptures daily^d, and receive nothing into our religion, faith and worship, but what is contained

^y Luk. i. 74, 75.

^x 1 Joh. v. 3.

cxix. 30, 31.

xvii. 11.

^z Luk. i. 6.

² 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.

^b ^c Ver. 128.

^x Joh. xiv. 21, 24.

^b Psal.

^d Act.

contained therein, and warranted thereby: and we must reject every way as false, that hath *no light of truth in it*, and every word as false, which is *not spoken according to this word*^c: for those only *do well*, who carefully *take heed unto this sure word of prophecy, the law and the testimony*^f of the God of truth.

4. It belongs to true religion, that our worship be addressed to God through a right medium, even the merit and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one only Mediator between God and men, and the alone Saviour of sinners: *for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all*^g. And blessed be God! that there is one Mediator, and that there needs no more; for he is ever-living and all-sufficient, and *by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*^h —the All for whom he gave himself a ransom. And *he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*ⁱ. And all other mediators will fail those who trust in them: for he, who is the truth it self, hath expressly told us, that *no man cometh to the Father, but by him*^k. And he is the only Saviour of sinners; *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*^l: of him alone the Father hath borne

^c Isai. viii. 20.

^b Heb. x. 14.

^l Acts iv. 12.

^f 2 Pet. i. 19.

ⁱ — vii. 25.

^g 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

^k John xiv. 6.

borne witness from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased^m: and to the praise of the glory of his grace, he hath made us accepted in the Belovedⁿ, and our spiritual sacrifices likewise^o.* So that neither our persons, nor our services, can ever be pleasing to God but through Jesus Christ alone: and therefore, *whatsoever we do in word or deed, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him^p.* To which it must be added,

5. THAT it is essential to true religion, that it be directed to a right end; that is, to the glory of God, as the ultimate and highest end. God makes himself known in the works of creation and providence, for this purpose, that men being led by them to know *his eternal power and godhead*, should *glorify him as God*, and be *thankful^q*: and it is a sin most heinous and provoking to him, when they do it not. *Glory to God in the highest*, is likewise the chief end of all his works of grace, and *good-will towards men^r* in Christ Jesus. We stand obliged therefore to eye and aim at his honour, in our natural and civil, and much more, in all our religious actions. As to the former, it is written, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God^s*: and as to the latter, we are expressly required, so to perform them,

^m Matt. xvii. 5.

^p Col. iii. 17.

^s 1 Cor. x. 31.

ⁿ Eph. i. 6.

^q Rom. i. 20, 21.

^o 1 Pet. ii. 5.

^r Luke ii. 14.

them, as *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ*^t. And in a due subordination to this best and highest end, and with a view to the promoting it, we are allowed to have an eye to our own happiness; to have *respect unto the recompence of the reward*^u; to *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*, that we may be saved^w; and to hope to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls^x; that we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord^y.

BUT on the other hand,

II. RELIGION is false and vain :

I. WHEN it is addressed to a false object, and the service is done unto them which by nature are no gods^z: whether to a meer creature, as those who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator^a; or to an image, a picture, or a crucifix, all which are forbidden in the second commandment. Exod. xx. 4, 5. And yet how many of those, who profess themselves to be wise and religious persons, have been, and still are, guilty of the abominable crime, of *changing the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things*^b ! Or, when we give up ourselves to more spiritual and refined,

^t 1 Pet. iv. 11.

^u Heb. xi. 26.

^w Acts xvi. 31.

^x 1 Pet. i. 9.

^y Rom. 6. 22, 23.

^z Gal. iv. 8.

^a Rom. i. 25.

^b Rom. i. 22, 23.

refined, but no less abominable and destructive idolatry, by setting up idols in our hearts, and adoring and serving our own sinful lusts as our gods^c; being *lovers of pleasures more than the lovers of God^d*. And which of us can clear ourselves, from having, in the days of our vanity, been deeply guilty of this odious idolatry? Have we not all occasion, with bitter lamentation, and self-abhorrence, to cry out? *We ourselves also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures^e*; and have all had our conversation amongst these vile idolaters, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others^f. Or, when the world is our idol; so that we love the world, and the things that are in the world, more than we love God; have our hearts exercised with covetous practices^g; esteem and pursue earth more than heaven, *supposing that gain is godliness^h*; are more anxious to have coffers full of gold than hearts full of grace; and in our profession and practice of religion, follow Christ more for earthly loaves, than for the bread of lifeⁱ. This is that covetousness which is idolatry^k; and *if any man thus love the world, the love of the Father is not in him^l*, nor hath

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^c Ezek. xiv. 3.^d 2 Tim. iii. 4.^e Tit. iii. 3.^f Eph. ii. 3.^g 2 Pet. ii. 14.^h 1 Tim. vi. 5.ⁱ John vi. 26, 27.^k Eph. v. 5.^l 1 John ii. 15.

he any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And the like may be said, when men trust in their own works of righteousness for their justification and salvation: for then they *say to the works of their hands, ye are our gods*; and thus going about to *establish their own righteousness*, they submit not themselves to the righteousness of God; for Christ, and he alone, is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth^m: and by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boastⁿ. To expect therefore to be justified and saved by our own works, is to put Christ out of office, and to look for the blessing in a way directly opposite to that which God has appointed, and which is so often expressly declared to be, *not of works*; nor by *works of righteousness which we have done*; but according to his mercy^o. Now all these forementioned ways, are vile idolatry, and paying our religious adoration to a false object of worship.

2. MENS religion is false, when the proper subject is wanting in it: that is, when the whole heart is not sincerely engaged in it, and the soul and spirit are not employed about it: but on the other hand their religion consists in a notional knowledge, a verbal profession, and external performances; so that having a form of godliness only, they deny the
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^m Rom. x. 3, 4.

ⁿ Eph. ii. 8, 9.

^o Tit. iii. 5.

the power thereof⁹. This being the case, all their religion is nothing but hypocrisy and formality, a vain shew, and a meer outside business: for if we do not turn unto the Lord with our whole heart, we do it but feignedly, saith the Lord^r: and God who searcheth the heart, and desireth truth in the inward parts, saith of us, *This people draw nigh me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour, and shew much love to me; but have removed their heart far from me^s; but in vain do they thus worship me; for if the heart be not right in the sight of God^t, all we do in religion is wrong.* And so it is,

3. WHEN our religion is guided by a false rule; whether it be our own conceits and imaginations; or, human inventions; oral traditions; ecclesiastical injunctions; popular customs; the laws of men; or, the pretended usages of the church: for none of these are the rule that God hath given us to walk by in religious matters; and if our religion have no better rule than this, it is nothing but superstition and will worship. It is true, and God knows it, that *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth^u*: and it is the business of true religion, not to set up and establish these imaginations for our rule; but to pull down these strong holds of the enemy, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,

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and

⁹ 2 Tim. iii. 5.
Ez. xxxiii. 31.

^r Jer. iii. 10.
^t Acts viii. 21.

^s Isai. 29. 13.
^u Gen. viii. 21.

and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ^x. And there have been, and are, more vile things in religion than *Jeroboam's calves*^y, and his month, which men have devised of their own hearts, and enjoined by their own wills; and which are taught by the precepts of men^z: but how many soever they are, God saith of them all, *in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines, or ordinances, the commandments of men*^a. Again,

4. OUR religion is false when our worship is addressed to the true God, through a false medium, to recommend it and us to his approbation and acceptance: as, through the names, the hands, and merits of angels, and saints, the blessed Virgin, and the long bead-roll of saints and martyrs; those men-made mediators, whom God never commanded us to come unto him by; and whom he hath expressly and earnestly warned us against, saying, *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of Angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind;—after the commandment and doctrines of men; which things have indeed a shew of wisdom and will-worship, and humility, and neglecting the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*^b. Or, through images, pictures, relics, crucifixes; or, by our own works of righteousness, as meritorious and deserving of the favour

^x 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.
xxix. 13.

^y 1 Kings xii. 32, 33.
^a Matth. xv. 7, 8, 9.

^z Ifai.
^b Col. ii. 18, 22, 23.

favour of God: the insufficiency of which, and the unwarrantableness of trusting in them, hath been shewed before. Now all these are breaches of the second commandment; and are idolatrous and superstitious practices: and of such men and their works, our Lord hath said, *Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed of amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God^c.* Once more,

5. OUR religion is false when it is directed to, and influenced by, low and unworthy ends, earthly and worldly views: such as to please men, and to get, or secure to ourselves, a name and reputation; like the Pharisees who did all their religious works to be seen of others^d; for they *loved the praise of men rather than the praise of God^e*: but if our end be to please men in our religion, we shall not be the servants of Christ^f. Or, to gain the profits, advantages, and honours of this world; as *Jehu's* zeal for the Lord, was kindled by his ambitious views of getting himself thereby exalted to the throne of *Israel*; which, when he had attained, his zeal for the Lord was extinct, and with it his religion also; for *Jehu took no heed, to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel, with all his heart^g*. Or, when the end of our religion is only, or principally to get a livelihood, and to fill our bellies; as was the case of those who followed Christ,

^c Luke xvi. 15.

^d Matt. xxiii. 5.

^e John xii. 43.

^f Gal. i. 10.

^g 2 Kings ix. and x. chap.

Christ, *because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled*; for when he fed them with the spiritual food of his doctrine only, and so dismissed them, without working another miracle to gratify their natural desires, *from that time they went back, and walked no more with him*^b—a full and convincing evidence this, that all their labour in religion, was only for the meat that perisheth; and that therefore they had in reality no true religion at all.

SECONDLY, religion is either natural or revealed. This distinction is derived from the different ways, by which we arrive at the knowledge of God, and of our duty to him; which are either by the light of natural reason; or, by the light of divine revelation: for there are no other ways of coming to this knowledge. And

I. NATURAL religion is that which is, or may be known of God, and of our duty to him, by the light of nature in man; arguing from the works of creation and providence: some account of which, is given in the following scriptures. Rom. i. 19, 20, 21.—

that which may be known of God is manifest in, or to them, for God hath shewed it to them; that is, to men as men, and even to the pagan world. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God,

^b John vi. 26—66.

God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom. ii. 14, 15.—*When the Gentiles which have not the law, that is, the written law in the holy scriptures, do by nature the things contained in the law, that is, by the light and power of nature, as reasonable creatures; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.* From which it is manifest, that there is a natural conscience, or self-knowledge in all men, which acts in them with a reference to the judgment of God; and which, without a natural religion, there could not be: for if the Gentiles, who were without the light of divine revelation in the written word, had not had some knowledge of God, and of good and evil, and of the obligations they were under to do the one, and avoid the other, they could have had no accusing nor excusing thoughts, with regard to the one, or the other.

AND if there be no natural religion; then the vast multitudes of the human race, that have, in most ages of the world, and in this present age do live, without the shining light of divine revelation in the holy scriptures, are under no obligation at all to be religious; that is, to know and love, worship and serve, honour and glorify God, their maker and preserver;

server; nor can they ever be called to account, reckoned with, or punished by him, for not doing it, any more than brute beasts. For where there are no natural obligations to religion, there can be no natural irreligion: where there is no natural obligation to be holy, there can be no criminal corruption; either of nature or practice, of heart or life: and if we be not, as rational creatures, bound to be good, we cannot be evil; for where there is no law, there is, there can be no transgression. So that if men will deny the doctrine, and discard the obligations of natural religion; they do thereby unavoidably overthrow and destroy the scripture doctrine and declaration, of the sinful corruption of nature and manners in the gentile world.

Now natural religion, with respect to man, (for I shall not here say any thing of angels) is that religion whose obligations are founded in, and flow immediately from, the relation between God the creator, and man the reasonable creature: and therefore, these obligations must be of universal extent, perpetual duration, and indispensibly binding upon all men, without exception or limitation. And here let us carefully observe the following things,

I. THE object of natural religion is God, considered as our great creator, kind benefactor, gracious preserver, and rightful sovereign; who *giveth to all life or breath, and all things;*
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in whom we live, and move, and have our being^k: and who is the only object worthy of our best affections and highest adorations: who is the center of all perfection in himself, and the sum of all felicity to us: whom we stand indispensibly bound to love above all, as the best of beings; to chuse before all, as our highest happiness; to believe him in all his declarations, as the fountain of truth; to obey him in all his requirements, as the supreme lord and rightful lawgiver; to submit unto him in all his dispensations towards us, as righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; to trust in him alone for all the good things we need, for time and eternity, as the first cause and author of all felicity; and to live to him alone, as the last and highest end, that God in all things may be acknowledged and glorified by us.

2. THE subject of natural religion is man, considered as a reasonable creature, originally made in the holy image of God, and possess'd of full power to obey him in all things^l. For *God made man upright*^m, straight, and exactly parallel to the line of the law, without any crookedness, or defect in him; and capable of being perfectly happy in the blissful enjoyment of God, to endless duration. And nothing but his own voluntary departure from, disobedience to, and rebellion against God, could ever deprive him of this happiness, or

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^k Aët. xvii. 28.

^l Gen. i. 26, 27.

^m Ec. vii. 29.

render him unfit for it. For if any thing else could have done this, he might have been miserable without being sinful; but it is our *iniquities* only that *have separated between us and our God*, and our *sins* that *have hid his face from* ⁿ us. And,

3. IF man had never sinned, the light of nature would have been abundantly sufficient for the rule of his obedience; and the religion of nature (with the due observation of the positive precepts God had given him) would have secured his eternal happiness; the promise of which was clearly implied in the threatening of death, in case of sin; and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, was an assuring pledge of it^o; in a plain allusion to which Christ hath promised, saying, *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*^p. For the light of nature in man was originally clear and bright, and sufficient to guide him in the way of duty to full felicity; it being quite free from all the dark clouds of error and vice, by which the understanding of men is now darkened. And the powers of nature furnished him with strength sufficient for performing his duty, and persevering therein, unto the attainment of ultimate glory, in the blissful vision and fruition of God for ever and ever. For he had the life of God in him, or else there could not have been

ⁿ Isa. lix. 2.

^o Gen. ii. 9.

^p Rev. ii. 7.

been an alienation from it by sin ; alienation pre-supposing possession. But sinful man is *alienated from the life of God^r* ; and if the first man, and all men in him, had not been set in the way to the glory of God, neither he nor we could by sin have fallen short of it ; but *there is now no difference amongst men, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God^r*. Nevertheless,

4. As long as God is God, and man is man, he a sovereign, and we his subjects, the obligations of natural religion, which all result from this relation between him and us, will necessarily continue in full force : for no disobedience of the creature, can ever make void the obligations of the law of nature ; nor can any incapacity brought upon us by sin, ever loose us from the bonds of duty to God, our neighbour, or ourselves. All the requirements therefore of natural religion, are in full force upon the whole, and every individual of the human race, and will so remain, unchangeably, indispensably, and perpetually, to the utmost extent of their eternal existence : and every failure of answering them, or contrariety to them, in thought, word, or deed, in heart or life, will render us justly liable to the curse and condemnation of the law, to the wrath of God ; and eternal death ; *for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of*

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^a Eph. iv. 18. Col. i. 21.

^r Rom. iii. 22, 23.

the law to do them[†]. And forasmuch as none of us keep the law, either in principle or practice, in the disposition of our hearts, or course of our lives ; we are all convinced and condemned of the law as transgressors ; and every one of us, as sinful fallen creatures, are liable to the penalty it denounces upon those who violate its precepts: *for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men ; the wages of sin is death ; and it is the judgment of God, whose judgment is according to truth, that they which commit such things are worthy of death*^{*}. And thus by our transgressions of the law of nature, we are all laid under its curse and condemnation. And here the religion of nature leaves us to perish for ever, for any thing that it can do to justify and save us : for it cannot give us life, because we give it not the righteousness and obedience it requires of us ; and it reveals no saviour of sinners, no justifying righteousness for guilty souls, nor any way of salvation for them that are lost. *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*[‡]. It highly concerns us therefore to enquire after,

II. REVEALED religion, by which alone eternal life, and a glorious immortality are brought to light ; and which is the only discoverer

[†] Gal. iii. 10.

— i. 32.

[‡] Gal. iii. 22.

^{*} Rom. i. 18. — vi. 23. — ii. 2.
Gal. iii. 21.

Rom. viii. 3.

coverer of our help, and foundation of our hope: for though "the light of nature in man, and the works of God plainly declare there is a God; yet his word and spirit only, do it fully and effectually, for the salvation of finners *."

Now revealed religion doth not take its rise, neither doth it naturally and necessarily result, from the relation between God as the creator, and man as the reasonable creature; but it was superadded, upon the entrance of sin, by the mere will and good pleasure of the blessed God. And it is made known unto us, by the express declaration of God himself, and in a divine and supernatural way. Under the old testament this revelation was made *by the mouth and writings of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began*^b. *All the prophets from Samuel, backwards; and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have foretold the blessed way of salvation by Christ, and the glorious days*^c *of the gospel. For the spirit of Christ was in them, and by them testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*^d, in the redemption and salvation of finners by him. And the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost^e: and by the motion of the same spirit

* Bap. Chat. A. to Q. 3^d.

^b Luk. i. 70. Act. iii. 21.

^c Act. iii. 24.

^d 1 Pet. i. 11.

^e 2 Pet. i. 21.

spirit they also wrote; for all scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness^f. And hence Christ after his resurrection, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, expounded unto his disciples in all the scriptures the things concerning himself; and said unto them, all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me^g.

And in the new testament, the great and glorious truths of revealed religion are delivered to us by the Son of God himself, the faithful and true witness; and by his holy apostles, under the infallible direction and guidance of his holy spirit; and are attested by many admirable and undoubted miracles: for God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son^h; and the great salvation, in this the last and brightest revelation of it, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. Now here let us observe the following things,

I. THE grand and peculiar subject of revealed religion is, what concerns the redemption

^f 2 Tim. iii. 16.
i. 1, 2.

^g Luk. xxiv. 27, 44:
ⁱ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

^h Heb.

demption and salvation of miserable, lost sinners by Jesus Christ, the *one mediator between* an offended God and offending man^k, and the alone saviour of sinners; and the way of their justification through his righteousness by faith: *for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith^l: and Christ is the end*, that is, the fulfilling, the perfecting, and compleating end of the law, *for righteousness, to every one that believeth^m; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesusⁿ.*

2. ALL things that concern this salvation are matter of pure revelation, which the light of nature in its brightest display could never discover; no not the light of nature in the holy angels, in whom it was never darkened by the clouds of sin: for even these perfect spirits were so far from attaining the knowledge of these things by their natural capacities, that we are told, they learn it from the church; as you may see in Eph. iii. 3, to the 11. *By revelation, says the apostle, he made known unto me the mystery—which in other ages was*

^k 1 Tim. ii. 5.
^m Rom. x. 4.

Act. iv. 12.

ⁿ Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

^l Rom. i. 17.

was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit—to whom this grace is given to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ—To the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, Much less could any of the sons of men, by the light of nature, find out the way of salvation for sinners: for in this affair, the wisdom of this world, and of the princes of this world, comes to nought: but we speak, says the apostle, the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew—But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, that is, by all his natural light, the things which God hath prepared, namely, in Christ Jesus, for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit. And much more to the same purpose we have in 1 Cor. ii. 6, &c. And again, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. The gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, comes to us, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; but is now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. This mystery, you see, was

was hid in God from ages and generations : and therefore it was not discoverable by the light of nature, nor disclosed and spread abroad by it ; but had for ever been hid from us, and from the eyes of all living, if God had not been graciously pleased, *in due time, to manifest his word through preaching* ; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace¹, which otherwise we had not known. Again,

3. ALL men, to whom this way of life and salvation is made known in the publication of it, stand indispensably bound by the law of nature to believe, receive, and worship God according to it. For the law of nature obligeth us to believe, and receive every revelation and declaration of God, as the God of truth ; and if we receive the witness of men, in civil affairs, the witness of God is greater, and more worthy of credit : for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son ; he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself ; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar ; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath

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the

¹ Tit. i. 3.

² Luke i. 77, 78, 79.

the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. And hence Christ saith, *When he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me*. But this he could not do, if their not believing on Christ was not a transgression of the law; for *where there is no law, there is no transgression*; and *sin is not imputed*, cannot be charged, or reprov'd, when, and *where there is no law*; but the holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on Christ; and therefore, their unbelief is a violation and transgression of the law, for *sin is the transgression of the law*. So that not to believe in Christ, where he is revealed and preached, is a sin against the law of nature, which obligeth all those who hear of him to believe in, and receive him. But this obligation to believe in Christ, cannot possibly extend any further than the light of divine revelation reacheth; for *how shall they believe, or be bound to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher*? And yet the gospel doth not make this obligation; for it is a revelation of *grace and truth by Jesus Christ*, and not a new law: but it finds the obligation to believe in Christ ready made to its hand, wherever it comes; for this *faith is a weighty matter of the law*, and is required by

¹ John v. 9. — 12.

² John xvi. 8, 9.

³ Rom.

iv. 15.

⁴ 1 John iii. 4.

⁵ Rom. x. 14.

⁶ John i. 17.

⁷ Mat. xxiii. 23.

by it, wherever the object of faith is revealed; and the omission of it, is highly criminal and reproveable.

THIRDLY, Religion is either moral, or instituted. And

I. THE moral part of religion is, for the matter of it, the very same with natural religion. For the first impression of the moral law, was made on the heart of man in his creation: and a very bright and excellent impression it was; *for in the image of God created he him^a*. So that man had imprest upon his nature an exact counterpart of the moral perfections of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; which is the matter of the moral law; *for the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good^a*. Now the moral part of religion consists in, and is made up of the duties, which as reasonable creatures, we owe to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves: all which is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which God with his own finger wrote and ingraven, on two tables of stone, at mount *Sinai*, and delivered them to his servant *Moses*, to be by him laid up and kept in the ark under the mercy-seat, and transcribed into the book of *Exodus*^b, where they stand on record to this day. And a still more comprehensive view of them our Saviour has given us in these words, *Thou shalt*

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love

^a Gen. i. 27.

^a Rom. vii. 12.

^b Exod. xx.

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy might; and thy neighbour as thyself^c. And the ten commandments thus comprised in these two, are explained and enforced, as a standing rule of life to all men, by the prophets, by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and by his apostles, throughout the old and new testament; a noble specimen of which we have in our Saviour's excellent sermon on the mount^d.

THE true reasons of God's making this new edition of the moral law at mount Sinai, and in the writings of Moses, were many, especially the following,

1. BECAUSE the original impression of the holy moral law on the heart of man, was greatly defaced, darkened, and corrupted by the entrance of sin; so that there was great need of a fuller and fairer copy of it, to be exhibited in the book of God, with a stronger inculcation of it, than the enfeebled light of nature was able to make.

2. THAT duty might be set in a clearer and stronger light, and sin might appear more odious, abominable, and destructive to men: whence the apostle says, *I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died: and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death; for sin, taking occasion*
by

^c Luke x. 27.

^d Mat. v, vi, and vii chapters.

by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me: wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid; but sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*. And,

3. THAT a Saviour might appear exceeding needful to us; even he, who was made of a woman, made under the law; that by obeying its precepts, and bearing its curse, he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons†.

THE obligations of this moral part of religion are eternal in their duration; unchangeable in their nature; universal in their extent; indispensably binding upon all men; and can never possibly expire, or be made void, since no authority inferior to that of God, can ever be able to alter or change, dispense with or dissolve them. Nay, it is impossible for God himself to dispense with these obligations; for that would be to deny and destroy his own moral perfections, of which the moral law is a transcript; and to overthrow and dissolve his own moral government, of which the moral law is the instrument; both which are utterly impossible for God to do; since he cannot change, nor deny himself. And therefore the moral part of

* Rom. vii. 9, to 13.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

of religion stands invariably the same, in its nature and obligation; and must necessarily do so, through every age and nation to the end of the world. To go on,

II. To the instituted part of religion; or the positive ordinances of divine worship. This is founded, not in the relation between God the creator, and man the reasonable creature; nor is it discoverable by the light of nature: but it arises out of the sole will, and good pleasure of God, the sovereign Lord, and supreme lawgiver, declared and made known by him to men, in the holy scriptures of the old and new testament: for these contain a full and compleat system of all true religion, both natural and revealed, moral and instituted; and are sufficient to make *the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work*ⁱ. And it is at his highest peril, that any man, or set of men whatsoever, presume to add any inventions, or institutions of their own, to what is therein contained: for *if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book*^k.

Now as all the instituted parts of religion, or the positive ordinances of divine worship, have their foundation, not in the unchangeable and perpetual law of nature, but in the declared will, and sovereign pleasure of God, the supreme lawgiver; so they are capable of variation,

ⁱ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

^k Rev. xxii, 18.

variation, as to their number, duration, extent, and obligation; capable of being confirmed and established, or changed and abolished, as his infinite wisdom judges most convenient. For instituted ordinances are not like the obligations of the moral law, eternal, unchangeable, universal, and indispensable, at all times, and to all men; but they are in all respects, dependant upon, and subject to, the will and good pleasure of their alwise and sovereign institutor.

AND it is worthy of our observation, that under every dispensation of God to men, both before and since the fall, there have always been some of these positive institutions added by him, to the religion of nature. As for instance; before the fall, while man was in the holy and happy state of spotless innocence, and unblemished purity, God gave him the positive law, concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*¹. Now it was not by any precept of nature, but by an immediate command of God, that this affair was settled: for it doth not appear, that the light of nature could either know, or make known, any difference of the trees of the garden; nor was it possible

¹ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

possible that it should, since God made them all *good for food*^m: nor could the light of nature tell, whether any, or many of them were prohibited; nor if so, which of them it was that was thus interdicted. But it was plainly the sovereign will and good pleasure of God alone, that forbad one tree and no more, when he might have forbidden the use of all but one; and that he fixed upon this tree and not another, when he was equally at liberty to have prohibited any he thought fit. And it is also most evident, that there was not naturally any hurtful or deadly quality in this tree, any more than in another: for we are expressly assured, that God *saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good*ⁿ; and in particular, that *every tree he made to grow out of the ground, and planted in the garden, was good for food*^o. There could not possibly therefore be any poisonous, or unwholesome quality in this tree naturally, which by eating it would make man mortal: but it was his transgressing the command of his maker, and that only, which according to the threatening denounced, exposed him to death of every kind, and in all its dreadful forms; for it was not by the lawful use of any thing that God had made, but by *sin* that *death entered into the world*^p.

AND it would well become, nay it highly concerns, those vain and self-conceited sons
of

^m Gen. ii. 9.
^p Rom. v. 12.

ⁿ Gen. i. 31.

^o Gen. ii. 8, 9

of men, who make light of the positive institutions of God, to remember that it was by the contempt and breach of a positive precept, that sin, with all its numerous train of dreadful miseries, entered into the world, and death set up his throne amongst men, and still reigns, spreading destruction far and wide. Let all such presumptuous mortals, therefore, as make light of transgressing God's positive laws, or of neglecting his instituted ordinances, be warned to *stand in awe and not sin^a*. Oh! *be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap^r*.

AND to this head likewise, if I mistake not, belongs the law of the seventh day sabbath; which was also enacted in the state of innocence: for though the light of nature was clear enough to discover, and the law of nature had authority enough to require, that some proper and sufficient time, ought to be set apart for, and employed in the special service and worship of God; and to enforce the due and devout observation, of whatsoever time it should please the Lord to appoint for that purpose; and so far, the fourth commandment is undoubtedly moral; yet I cannot see, that the light of nature was able to discover, or had authority to dictate, whether it should be some part of every day, that should be kept sacred to the Lord; or,

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whether

^a Psal. iv. 4.

^r Gal. vi. 7.

whether it should be now and then, a whole day; and if so, whether it should be a third, a fifth, or a seventh day; or any other day; or a day in a month; or in any other longer reckoning of time: and therefore, the light of nature was obliged to wait, for the signification of the mind of God, and an order from heaven to determine this affair: and accordingly, we are told, how God interposed, and signified his pleasure in this case, Gen. ii. 3. *And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made:* which account carries in it the plain marks of a positive institution; for it is not said, that the light of nature discovered, or that *Adam* sanctified, or set apart the seventh day; for God did not bring the seven days of the week before *Adam*, as he did the beasts and birds, *to see what he would call them*^{*}, and which of them he would appoint to be the weekly sabbath; but it was God himself that blessed and sanctified the seventh day, or set it apart for a special religious use; for other kind of blessing and sanctifying it neither needed, nor was capable of; for no day had as yet been either defiled with sin, or cursed of God. Nor do I think, it can be made certainly and clearly appear, that the reason God assigns for this institution, was obvious to the light of nature; for though the being of God, and
his

^{*} Gen. ii. 19.

his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen in the works of creation, and strongly demonstrable by the light of nature, tracing effects up to the first cause; and the matter certainly concludeable from thence, that *God made the world, and all things therein*[†]; yet the light of nature can never shew and ascertain the manner how the worlds were framed, but it is *through faith*, that is, by the light and testimony of divine revelation, that *we come to understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God*[‡]. And in like manner, the space of time in which God made the world, seems to be knowable, only by the light of divine revelation, and not by the light of nature. So that, the seventh day Sabbath, was a positive institution; and the reason assigned, why God was pleased to appoint the seventh day of the week, rather than another, was made known by divine revelation.

AND further, to confirm this thought, that the sabbath was originally a positive institution, and therefore capable of being changed, our Lord Jesus Christ hath expressly told us, that he, *the Son of man, is Lord also of the sabbath*^x; as well as of other ceremonial and positive institutions: which, I think, plainly intimates, that the time of keeping the sabbath, is alterable, whenever he, who is the Lord of it, pleaseth to give it a change: for it is very observable, that he never said, he was Lord of

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any

† Rom. i. 20.

‡ Act. xvii. 24.

* Heb. xi. 3.

x Mar. ii. 28.

any precept purely moral: but on the contrary, he hath kindly and carefully cautioned us against entertaining such a thought, saying, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; for verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*^y; and so, instead of claiming a lordship over them, he goes on to establish, explain, and enforce the precepts of the moral law. And again, he assures us, *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*^z.

AND it is very plain, from several passages in the new testament, that the apostles of Christ, and the primitive church, ever after Christ's resurrection, observed and kept holy to the Lord, the first day of the week, as the christian sabbath; which we think, we have no sufficient reason to doubt, was done by the authority and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord also of the sabbath: especially, when we consider, that it was also on this day of the week, that the Holy Ghost was given, in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts, for the propagation of the gospel^a: and that Jesus Christ, the Lord from heaven, hath honoured this day by putting his own name peculiarly up^{on} it, calling it, *the Lord's day*^b; that is, the day which the Lord hath distinguished from, and dignified above all

^y Mat. v. 17, 18, &c.
^a Act. ii.

^z Luk. xvi. 17.
^b Rev. i. 10.

all the other days of the week, by his resurrection from the dead; the descent of his quickening spirit; and upon which he hath put the stamp of his authority; and requires it to be kept holy unto him. So that it becomes us to say of it, *This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it*^c.

AND whether the change of the sabbath, only concerned the people of Israel; and our christian sabbath, is the true original seventh day of the week, as the late learned *Mr. Bedford**, hath taken great pains to prove, by astronomical calculation: or whether the change of the day, from the seventh to the first day of the week, is only under the christian dispensation, as others think and plead; can be of no great importance to us, since, as we think, it plainly appears, that the seventh day was sanctified by positive institution; and therefore is not in its own nature, of perpetual, unalterable obligation, as the law of nature is; but is capable of being changed: since our Lord Jesus Christ, hath declared himself to be Lord of the sabbath; and hath blest and sanctified the first day of the week, by his resurrection from the dead, and the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven: and since the apostles of Christ, who acted by his authority, and were under the infallible guidance of the holy spirit, practised themselves,

^c Psal. cxviii. 24.

* Scrip. Chron.

selves, and taught the primitive churches, to keep their religious assemblies on the first day of the week; and all other churches of Christ, under the influence of their example, have, generally, observed it down to this day; and have been signally blest in so doing: we think, we need not trouble ourselves, or others, with any doubts or disputes about it; but apply ourselves to the due and religious observation of it: always praying, that if we, or others, are in any thing otherwise minded than is according to the mind of Christ, God would graciously please to reveal it unto us.

AND to this head of instituted religion and worship, belonged all the numerous laws, concerning priesthood and sacrifices, that obtained and were in force under the old testament, not only among the people of Israel, but from the fall of man, and downwards, both before and under the *Mosaic* dispensation, to the death of Christ. And so did circumcision, which was enjoined to *Abraham* and his family, and their descendants, through out all their generations; but not to the other patriarchs and holy men, who were either before, contemporary with, or after him. As also the very famous institution of the passover, which was enjoined to the people of *Israel* alone, separate from other nations; and that, not before, but at their deliverance out of the land of *Egypt*. All which ordinances and institutions, having attained their end, and lived

lived out their day, as *shadows of good things to come*, ceased at the death of Christ, and expired on his cross: for they were but a *figure, for the time then present*; and *sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*. Nor were these *carnal ordinances* designed to continue in force, unalterable, and for ever; but were *imposed only untill the time of reformation*^d; when Christ by his death *blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances, that was against us, Gentiles, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*; having *abolished in his flesh, the law of commandments, contained in ordinances*^e: and all these kinds of institutions were comprised in that which is abolished.

AND notwithstanding our different ways of thinking in some respect, we are all heartily and happily agreed in this, that christian baptism, and the Lord's supper, are positive institutions under the new testament; which we are sure, are to continue and abide in the church of Christ, without any change, or abolition, to the end of the world: for our Lord Jesus Christ, after his glorious resurrection from the dead, came and spake unto his eleven disciples, and in them to us, saying, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*; go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them

^d Heb. 9, and 10, chapters.

^e Col. ii. 14

^f Eph. ii. 13.

^g 2 Cor. iii. 13.

them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen^h. So that our Lord Jesus Christ, invested with this fulness of power, hath appointed the holy ordinance of baptism to accompany the preaching, and believing reception of the gospel, not to the Jews only, but to all other nations also ; and that not for a short and limited time, but even unto the end of the world. And the great apostle of the Gentiles, who received his conversion to the faith of Christ, and his call to the ministry of the word, from a glorified Jesus, after his triumphant ascension to heaven, tells us, with an undoubted assurance, *I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me : for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*^k. And hence it is most clear and certain, that these two divine ordinances, are some of those things which cannot be shaken^l ; but are to remain in the church of Christ, untill

^h Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.
25, 26.

^l Heb. xii. 27.

^k 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24,

untill he come the second time to put an end to the world.

FOURTHLY and lastly. Religion is either speculative and notional, or experimental and practical: it is either in the head and tongue only; or in the heart and life also. And,

1. THE speculative and notional part of religion consists in mens having the form of knowledge and of truth, in the law of God and gospel of Christ, according as recorded in the holy scriptures. And we all stand indispensably obliged by our Lord Jesus Christ, to *search the scriptures*^m, and to hear and understand what he speaks to us therein; for *he called the multitude, and said unto them, hear and understand*ⁿ: and we are bound to *hold fast the form of sound words, which we have heard of him, in faith and love*^o; to *hold fast the faithful words, as we have been taught*^p; and *earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*^q. And this knowledge is highly necessary; for the way whereby God *will have all men to be saved*, is by their *coming to the knowledge of the truth*^r; and Christ, the righteous judge, we are assured, *will take vengeance on them that know not God*^s. And there is no acceptable worshipping of an unknown God^t, nor saving faith in an unknown Jesus; for if we know not who, and what he is, we cannot believe on him^u: nor

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can

^m Joh. v. 39.

^p Tit. i. 9.

^s 2 Thes. i. 8.

ⁿ Mat. xv. 10.

^q Jud. 3.

^t Act. xvii. 23.

^o 2 Tim. i. 13.

^r 1 Tim. ii. 4.

^u Joh. ix. 36.

can there be any true experience, or due practice, of what we do not understand; for all true religion is a reasonable service^w; and therefore that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; for this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent^x. But if our knowledge be no more than a speculative and notional knowledge, that floats in the head, and is profest by the tongue, but doth not reach, and renew the heart, nor influence the life, it will perish with us: for if we have only the form of knowledge and of truth, and a form of godliness, while we deny the power thereof^y, we shall fall under the condemnation of that servant, who, knowing his lord's will, and yet not preparing himself, neither doing according to it, was beaten with many stripes^z. And to those who profess that they know God, but in works deny him; being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate^a, or void of judgment, Christ shall say, I tell you, I know not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity^b: and though a worker of iniquity may have a quick understanding; yet, alas! it is most evident, he hath not a good one; for a good understanding have all they, and none but they, that do his commandments^c: and it is to him that ordereth his conversation aright, that the Lord

^w Rom. xii. 1.^x John xvii. 3.^y 2 Tim. iii. 5.^z Luke xii. 47.^a Tit. i. 16.^b Luke xiii. 21.^c 1st. iii. 10.

Lord hath promised, to *shew the salvation of God*^d. And on the other hand,

II. THE experimental and practical part of religion is to be found only when and where, this form of sound doctrine hath a living impression upon the heart, and a governing influence over the life and conversation: when men *obey from the heart, the form of doctrine which was delivered*^e them; and so *behold the glory of the Lord, in the glass of the gospel*, as to be *changed into the same image, by the spirit of the Lord*^f; and are no longer *conformed to the course of this world*, that lieth in wickedness, but are *transformed by the renewing of their mind*^g; heartily approving and practically conforming themselves to, the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God: when they *shew their faith by their works*; and evidence that God is their God, and they his people, by having his *laws put in their mind, and written in their hearts*^h; and their *conversation as it becometh the gospel of Christ*ⁱ. Then it appears that men are indeed partakers of *the grace of God that bringeth salvation*; when it reigneth in their hearts, and *teacheth them, effectually and practically, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world*^k; and, as *the Lord requireth of them, to do justly; to love mercy, and to walk humbly with*^l their

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God,

^d Psal. l. 23.^e Rom. xii. 2.^k Tit. ii. 11, 12.^e Rom. vi. 17.^h Heb. viii. 10.^l Mic. vi. 8.^f 2 Cor. iii. 18.ⁱ Phil. i. 27.

God, in *all his commandments and ordinances blameless*^m. This is experimental and practical religion; without which, all airy notions, fair professions, and high pretensions to religion, are vain and worthless, and will end in hell. If our religion doth not make us good, it will never do us good; if it doth not make us holy, it can never make us happy; for *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*ⁿ. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness^o: and thinkest thou this, O man, that doest such things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or, despisest thou the riches of his goodness, proclaimed in the gospel, and his forbearance and long-suffering towards thee, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness^p, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath,^q and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds^r.

the
wrath,

I SHALL now close this discourse with a few remarks, not impertinent to what hath been said about religion. And

I. FROM what has been said it follows that the general distinction of *true* or *false*, compriseth under it all the religions that ever have been, are, or shall be in the world, how various

^m Luke i. 6.
^p Jud. 4.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 14.
^q Rom. ii. 3—6.

^o Rom. i. 18.

rious or multiplied soever. For as there is but *one Lord*, so there is but *one faith*, which was once delivered to the saints, and is as old as the book of God: whatsoever therefore is really new in matters of religion, is certainly false. How happy are they then who chuse *the way of truth* and walk therein, while there be many who follow the pernicious ways of error! But on the other hand, the false religions, the ways of error, into which the unhappy sons of men have been seduced by the father of lies, have been, and are, many and various: for though all along under the old testament, there were but two different religions, the Jewish and the Heathen; the worshippers of the true God, and the worshippers of idols; yet the latter, included in it false gods, and false ways, almost without number. And now, for a long series of time, there is, and hath been in the world, four very different religions, namely, the Pagan, the Jewish, the Mahometan, and the Christian: and the gray hairs of antiquity, are so far from being a safe and certain mark of the true religion, that if our choice of religion were to be determined by them, we must all renounce Christianity, and become Pagans, since Paganism is many hundred years older than Christianity. And all the numerous tribes of Deists, of every sort, that intermingle among Christians, belong to the Pagan

Pagan religion; with this dreadful aggravation of their sin, that they disbelieve, deride, and vilify the divine revelation, which the heathen nations have not in their hands; and therefore cannot be guilty of rebelling, so heinously, against the light, as these men do ^u.

AND amongst those that bear the name of Christians in general, there are two very different religions; namely, the Popish religion, which abounds with Pagan idolatries, heathenish rites and ceremonies, human inventions, abominable superstitions, and barbarous cruelties against those who differ from them: and the reformed Protestant religion, which professedly adheres to the holy scriptures alone, as the only sure ground and certain rule of faith, worship, and obedience; and herein it does well; for it is written, *we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed* ^w: *and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God* ^x.

2. It is a common and evil surmise of weak and ignorant, or evil-minded and designing men (which we ought all carefully to avoid in ourselves, and to rebuke in others) to insinuate, or assert, that persons, who all make a laudable profession of the true christian reformed religion, are of different religions; because they disagree in some notions and sentiments of doctrine, or in some modes
and

^u John iii. 18 — 21. ^w 2 Pet. i. 19. ^x Gal. vi. 16.

and circumstances of worship. But while they all hold the head Christ, and differ from each other only in a few less essential points (which indeed can hardly be avoided in this imperfect state, wherein the best of us know but in part) they are not therefore of different religions; for they all love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are beloved by him; and stand all bound by his own new commandment to love one another as he hath loved them^y; that is, notwithstanding all their mistakes and imperfections, and all their different sentiments and practices in the lesser matters of religion. And if he were not to exercise his love towards us, even under these circumstances, sad would be the case of us all. And it is very certain, that *whereunto* every man hath *attained*, in the knowledge of truth and duty, he ought honestly and uprightly, to *walk by the same rule*, and to *mind the same thing*^z; without judging and censuring, or cursing and condemning those that differ from him, and that for no other crime than being an honest man: for those that *thrust with side and with shoulder, and push the diseased with their horns*^a; are men of no commendable nor desirable character. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: and why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before*

^y John xiii. 34.^z Phil. iii. 16.^a Ezek. xxxiv. 21.

before the judgement-seat of Christ^b: therefore judge nothing before the time, concerning mens state and condition towards God, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every honest christian man have praise of God^c.

AND here, I beg leave to borrow a beautiful paragraph, from a late ingenious and candid writer *, “ In a grove of tulips, or a
 “ knot of pinks, says he, one perceives a
 “ difference in almost every individual. Scarce
 “ any two are turned and tintured exactly
 “ alike: each allows himself a little particularity in his dress, though all belong to
 “ one family; so that they are various and
 “ yet the same.——A pretty emblem this
 “ of the smaller differences between protest-
 “ ant christians. There are modes in religion, which admit of variation, without
 “ prejudice to sound faith or real holiness:
 “ Just as the drapery, on these pictures of
 “ the spring, may be formed after a variety
 “ of patterns, without blemishing their beauty,
 “ or altering their nature.——Be it so then,
 “ that in some points of inconsiderable consequence, several of our brethren dissent:
 “ yet let us all live amicably and sociably together; for we harmonize in principals,
 “ though we vary in punctilios. Let us join
 “ in

^b Rom. xiv. 4, 10.

^c 1 Cor. iv. 5.

* Hervey's Med. on Flower-Garden, p. 174—176.

“ in conversation, and intermingle interests ;
 “ discover no estrangement of behaviour,
 “ and cherish no alienation of affection : if
 “ any strife subsists, let it be to follow our
 “ divine Master most closely, in humility of
 “ heart, and unblameableness of life ; let it
 “ be to serve one another most readily, in
 “ all the kind offices of a cordial friendship.
 “ Thus we shall be united, though distin-
 “ guished ; united in the same grand funda-
 “ mentals, though distinguished by some small
 “ circumstantial ; united in one important
 “ bond of brotherly love, though distinguish-
 “ ed by some slighter peculiarities of senti-
 “ ment.

“ I APPREHEND that between christians,
 “ whose judgments disagree only about a
 “ form of prayer, or manner of worship,
 “ there is no more essential difference, than
 “ between flowers that bloom from the same
 “ kind of seed, but happen to be something
 “ diversified in the mixture of their colours :
 “ ———Whereas if one denies the divinity of
 “ our Lord Jesus Christ, and degrades the
 “ incarnate God to the meanness of a meer
 “ creature ; if another cries up the worthi-
 “ ness of human works, and depreciates the
 “ alone meritorious righteousness of the glo-
 “ rious mediator ; if a third addresses the in-
 “ communicable honours to a finite being,
 “ and bows to the image, or prays to the
 “ faint :” ——— And I add, if a fourth ad-
 vances reason above revelation ; gives the pre-
 H ference

ference to natural above revealed religion in the affair of our salvation; and makes the most high God a subject, and the will of man a sovereign over him in the work of conversion: "These are errors, in my opinion, unhappily derogatory to the Redeemer's dignity, and not a little prejudicial to the comfort of his people: against these, therefore, to remonstrate, bespeaks not the censorious bigot, but the friend of truth and the lover of mankind."

3. As the religion we profess, is undoubtedly right in its foundation; being *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone^a*, even the stone which God hath laid in Zion for a foundation, and whereon alone we can build with safety; *for other foundation can no man lay^c*; and he is *the way, the truth, and the life*; and *no man cometh to the father but by him^f*: so it most highly concerneth every one of us to see, that our religion hath an experimental power in us, and a practical influence over us; that *Christ be in us the hope of glory^g*; and that he be *the end of our conversation^h* in the world. And then, it will not be long before we shall receive, in a better world, *the end of our faith, even the salvation of our soulsⁱ*: for to all those who *have now their fruit unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life^k*. And henceforward for ever, we shall

^a Eph. ii. 20. ^c 1 Cor. iii. 11. ^f John xiv. 6. ^g Col. i. 27. ^h Heb. xiii. 7, 8. ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 9. ^k Rom. vi. 22.

shall be all light and truth, without darkness or error; for *then* we shall no more see through a glass darkly, but face to face¹: we shall be all of one mind, without any unhappy differences; and without a jarring note, shall join in the heavenly song—*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb^m*. Then we shall be all purity without the least contamination; for none of the defilements of sin shall enter into the New Jerusalemⁿ above. Then we shall be all undisturbed peace, without a law in our members warring against the law of our minds^o; and all joy and serenity, without any clouds of sorrow and dejection: for we shall see his face, and shall not sorrow any more at all^p. Then we shall be all holiness and no sin, we shall be all life and no death, and all happiness and no misery; and all this world without end, for ever more. And now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now, and ever. Amen^q.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.^m Rev. vii. 10.ⁿ Rev. xxi. 27.^o Rom. vii. 23.^p Jer. xxxi. 12. Isai. xxx. 19. Rev. xxi. 4.^q Jud. 24, 25.

F I N I S

shall be all light and truth, without darkness
or error; for then we shall no more be
in light and truth, but face to face: we shall be
all of one mind, without any unhappy differ-
ences; and without a saving note, shall join in
the heavenly song—*Glory to our God which
dwells upon the wings, and unto the Lamb.*
Then we shall be all glory without the least
constraint; for none of the judgments of
his law enter into the New Jerusalem; above.
Then we shall be all undisturbed peace, with-
out a law in our midst, striving against the
law of our minds; and all joy and longing,
without any clouds of sorrow and dejection;
for we shall see his face, and shall not forever
wait at all. Then we shall be all holiness and
no sin, we shall be all life and no death, and
all happiness and no misery; and all this
world without end, for ever more. And now
unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of
his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wife of
our Saviour, be all honour, dominion and
power, both now and for ever. Amen.

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1 Cor. xiii. 12. Rev. vii. 10. Rom. vii. 25. 1 Thess. v. 23. 1 Pet. i. 8. 1 John. i. 3. 1 John. iii. 2. 1 John. iv. 17. 1 John. v. 20. 1 John. v. 26. 1 John. v. 28. 1 John. v. 30. 1 John. v. 31. 1 John. v. 32. 1 John. v. 33. 1 John. v. 34. 1 John. v. 35. 1 John. v. 36. 1 John. v. 37. 1 John. v. 38. 1 John. v. 39. 1 John. v. 40. 1 John. v. 41. 1 John. v. 42. 1 John. v. 43. 1 John. v. 44. 1 John. v. 45. 1 John. v. 46. 1 John. v. 47. 1 John. v. 48. 1 John. v. 49. 1 John. v. 50. 1 John. v. 51. 1 John. v. 52. 1 John. v. 53. 1 John. v. 54. 1 John. v. 55. 1 John. v. 56. 1 John. v. 57. 1 John. v. 58. 1 John. v. 59. 1 John. v. 60. 1 John. v. 61. 1 John. v. 62. 1 John. v. 63. 1 John. v. 64. 1 John. v. 65. 1 John. v. 66. 1 John. v. 67. 1 John. v. 68. 1 John. v. 69. 1 John. v. 70. 1 John. v. 71. 1 John. v. 72. 1 John. v. 73. 1 John. v. 74. 1 John. v. 75. 1 John. v. 76. 1 John. v. 77. 1 John. v. 78. 1 John. v. 79. 1 John. v. 80. 1 John. v. 81. 1 John. v. 82. 1 John. v. 83. 1 John. v. 84. 1 John. v. 85. 1 John. v. 86. 1 John. v. 87. 1 John. v. 88. 1 John. v. 89. 1 John. v. 90. 1 John. v. 91. 1 John. v. 92. 1 John. v. 93. 1 John. v. 94. 1 John. v. 95. 1 John. v. 96. 1 John. v. 97. 1 John. v. 98. 1 John. v. 99. 1 John. v. 100.

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